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THE CHURCH AND THE SLAVE POWER.

A SERMON

PREACHED BEFORE THE STUDENTS OF THE

METHODIST BIBLICAL INSTITUTE,

CONCORD, N. H. FEBRUARY 23, 1860.

BY REV. S. M. VAIL, D. D.

PUBLISHED BY THE STUDENTS.

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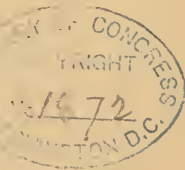
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CONCORD, N. H., Feb. 28th, 1860.

REV. S. M. VAIL, D. D.,

Reverend and dear Sir :—By a vote of the students of the Methodist General Biblical Institute, we, the undersigned, are appointed a committee to respectfully solicit the publication of your sermon, delivered before the students on the 23d inst.

We sincerely hope you will grant our request, as we believe the truth will be thereby promoted.

Your affectionate Pupils,

CHARLES E. LITTLE,
EDWIN WARRINER,
E. S. CHEESEMAN.

DEAR BRETHREN :—Your polite note informing me that "by a vote of the students of the Methodist General Biblical Institute, you were appointed a committee to respectfully solicit the publication of my sermon delivered before the students, on the 23d inst.," has been received and duly considered.

The sermon was not prepared with a view to publication, but as you judge its publication would subserve the cause of truth I do not feel at liberty to withhold it.

Your affectionate Teacher and Brother,

STEPHEN M. VAIL.

REV. CHARLES E. LITTLE, }
REV. EDWIN WARRINER, } *Committee.*
REV. E. S. CHEESEMAN, }



GEORGE H. JONES

SERMON.

TEXT: *Romans*, 13: 1—10. Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: The powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God, and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same. For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain, for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil. Wherefore, ye must needs be subject not only for wrath, but also for conscience' sake. For this cause pay ye tribute also, for they are God's ministers attending continually upon this very thing. Render therefore to all their dues; tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honor to whom honor. Owe no man anything but to love one another; for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law. For this thou shalt not commit adultery; thou shalt not kill; thou shalt not steal; thou shalt not bear false witness; thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.

Acts, 4: 18—20. And they, [the Jewish council or Sanhedrim,] called them [the apostles] and commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus. But Peter and John answered and said unto them, whether it be right in the sight of God, to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye. For we can not but speak the things which we have seen and heard.

It has seemed to me not inappropriate on this occasion to direct the minds of the young men of this Institution, to a subject involved in the Scriptures just read, which if properly understood and acted upon, will render your ministry a blessing both to the present and future generations, and which if not understood and not acted upon, will render your ministry of doubtful utility.

It is of the highest importance that a Christian minister entertain right opinions, and then that he be a man of so much courage and faith that he shall bravely carry them out.

It is only a few months ago, that one of our Superintendents, Rev. Bp. Janes, while holding the Arkansas Conference at Bonham, Fannin County, Texas, was interrupted on the holy Sabbath

in the midst of the religious services, usual on such occasions, by a body of armed men, who commanded the Bishop and his conference consisting of about twenty members, to cease their work as ministers of the Gospel in connection with the Methodist Episcopal Church, in the county of Fannin, "henceforth and forever." That in the event of their failing to comply, they might expect to be visited with such pains and penalties as an outraged Southern community might see fit to inflict.

It is not to be forgotten, that a few years ago several of our worthy ministers were called to suffer even unto blood, in Missouri and Kansas, for no other offence than that they belonged to the Methodist Episcopal Church, which is and ever has been an Anti-Slavery Church.

The pious and youthful Kelley was dragged from the preacher's stand and hurried through cold and storm to a distant place to die of violence and exposure. The Rev. Mr. Sellers had molten tar poured upon his head and shoulders, filling his eyes and ears. Rev. Father Holland, was shot dead at the same time, for mildly remonstrating against this violence.

The Rev. Daniel Worth, a pious and excellent Presbyterian minister of North Carolina, writes from Queensboro jail, under date of Dec. 26th, 1859: "I have been three days incarcerated in this jail on charge of a breach of the criminal law of this State in *preaching*, and selling incendiary books, Helper's *Impending Crisis*, &c."

In Kentucky, Rev. Wm. Kendrick, and Rev. Geo. Candee, were recently seized by a mob, and prevented from filling their Sabbath appointments, one of which was the preaching the funeral sermon of a brother minister's daughter. They then had their hair and beards shaved, and their heads and faces covered with tar.

Rev. John G. Fee, Rev. J. A. R. Rodgers, Rev. J. F. Boughton, and Rev. J. S. Davis, and some members of their churches have been driven out of the State.

Verily the days of martyrdom have not yet passed, and we have to discuss the old question anew, "*What is our duty when the government forbids us to preach?*" It is true that the recent events above related, showing the deadly hostility of the slave power have grown out of the fact, that *that* power fears the preaching of Anti-Slavery doctrines.

The truth is, when the faithful preacher opens his mouth and denounces any darling sin, Satan is very much concerned to have his mouth closed by some means, and if it cannot be done by mild means, it must be by violence.

There is a portion of our people, both of the North and the South, who declare that the government is supreme over all its subjects, and that any preaching contrary to the will of the government is contrary to the general good, and therefore contrary to the law of God. *Vox Populi Vox Dei*. "The voice of the people is the voice of God," say they, "being expressed in legislative enactments."

When in 1856 a distinguished United States Senator in discussing the fugitive slave law, so called, ventured to remind his brother Senators, that there was a "*Higher Law*," than *human constitutions*, a pious horror ran through the souls of all the upholders of slavery, both North and South. "There is a higher law than human constitutions or human enactments." A very simple sentence and very full of truth as I think. And yet even many professedly Christian men, not politicians and lawyers only, but even *ministers*, united in the denunciation of the horribly, monstrously treasonable phrase. "*There is a higher Law*." And what is there more implied in this simple phrase than is implied in the declaration of Peter and John to the Jewish Sanhedrim? "*Whether it be right for us to obey you rather than God, judge ye*."

In this connection we may be pardoned, we trust in alluding to another phrase of the same honorable Senator, which escaped from his lips it would seem, by the purest accident, while speaking to an assembly of his fellow citizens. "*There is*" said he "*an irrepressible conflict, between opposing and enduring forces, and it means that the United States must and will, sooner or later become either entirely a slaveholding nation, or entirely a free labor nation*." Horror of horrors, again! The whole of pro-slavery conservatism—conservatism! I should say, propagandism—is seized with a sudden catalepsy. The whole Northern atmosphere is full of Sharp's rifles and Colt's revolvers. "*There is an irrepressible conflict*." And again we ask is there any thing more implied in this phrase, than is implied in the words of the Apocalyptic Seer, "*There was war in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon fought and his angels, and prevailed not*." And the conflict

will be *irrepressible*, until the Angel of the covenant shall descend from heaven with a great chain in his hand and lay hold of that old Serpent, which is the Devil and bind him a thousand years.

We live in stirring times, when Satan rages because his time is short, and when the saints too must fight with new courage and superior skill. New questions are almost every day evolved in Philosophy, in Theology and in Morals. Satan becomes an angel of light, and uses all his arts to prop up his falling kingdom. I wish in this discourse to stir up in the hearts of my young brethren some of those sentiments and feelings which will better fit us for the work of the Gospel, and to indicate to you some of those obligations resting upon us as citizens, and as ministers of the Lord Jesus.

The Apostle says in the first verse of the text, “*The powers that be are ordained of God.*” Hence it has been inferred by some, that all governments of whatever kind, bad as well as good, are established by God and meet with his approval. But this is an entire misconception of the meaning of the Apostle. *Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers*, i. e., to such higher powers as do not exalt themselves above the Divine power. Every power that contravenes the Divine power is unlawful, and is not to be regarded. Thus Moses and Aaron resisted the power of Pharaoh when it became tyrannical, and demanded of Pharaoh that he should let the people go. So also Daniel resisted the power of the King of Babylon and refused to cease to pray unto the God of heaven. So the Apostles refused to obey the Jewish Sanhedrim and continued to preach as the text declares. Any power, in a word, which makes it necessary for a subject, in any way or manner to violate a single moral principle, or in any way to violate the golden rule, *as ye would that others should do unto you, do ye even so unto them*; or the royal law—*thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself*, is a wicked usurpation and tyranny, and is not to be obeyed. That the Apostle could not mean that we are to be subject to any power which lords it over the Divine law is clear from the 9th verse of the text, “*for this thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet, and if there be any other commandment it is briefly comprehended in this saying, Thou shalt love he neighbor as thyself.*”

Our position is simply this therefore, that any power which assumes to violate or to cause its subjects to violate this royal law of God is not a "higher power" in the sense of the Apostle; otherwise, the Apostle would contradict himself for he commands us to obey God at the same time that we are to be subject to the higher powers. It is necessary therefore that the higher powers be in subjection to the Divine law. And it further follows that any law, so called, enacted by men, which is in conflict with God's law or the Holy Scriptures, is no law, and is not to be regarded as law.

To call such statutes, laws, is a misnomer and an absurdity, and it is time our legislators understood it. We are Christians and not infidels or heathen, and hence must be governed by the law of Christ.

We ask attention to the phrase in the last part of the text—"The powers that be are ordained of God." "Here," says the slave power "all your notions about the higher law of God are put to flight." Here God himself says by his holy Apostle that all governments are divinely ordained, and of course can do nothing wrong." Even the cruel government of Nero is here directly sanctioned, and it is emphatically declared, that to resist Nero is to resist the ordinance of God. Never mind if Nero does take Christian men, and Christian women, and sew them up in the skins of wild beasts, throw them into the amphitheater and then let loose upon them fierce Roman dogs, to amuse a heathen audience. These fierce creatures tear the flesh of these innocent victims from off their bones,—piece-meal, till death ends the struggle. Never mind, it is all right—it is an ordinance of Nero, one of the powers ordained of God. When this form of amusement becomes stale, Nero makes another decree. He commands his officers to take Christian men, and Christian women, and cover their bodies with tar and pitch, and bind them to a stake—the chin firmly resting upon its apex, and then he commands them to kindle a fire around them whose flames shall leap up and spread over their quivering flesh, and a heathen audience shouts and exults in this new invention and refinement of cruelty. Nevertheless it is all right—it is an ordinance of the powers that be—of the Emperor Nero.

Strange as it may appear, this very doctrine of Devils has come down to our times, and is acted upon every day in this so called Christian Republic of the United States of America. The argu-

ment is "The slave power of slave States is one of the powers that be. The slave power therefore is divinely ordained, and he that resists this power, resists the ordinance of God."

Many of the Doctors of the Church bow down to this syllogism. Instead of making the church stand erect, the monitor and guide of the State, she becomes the poor subservient tool of the State. "*The powers that be*" they say "*are ordained of God,*" and the church is commanded to submit to whatever the State commands." If this doctrine be true and without limitation how could the Apostles Peter and John stand up before the Jewish Council, and say, "Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God judge ye." How could the Apostle Paul dare to stand in the presence of Felix and thunder forth the doctrine of God, on righteousness, temperance, and judgment till Felix trembled?

The minister of God must be independent. The pulpit must be unshackled, or it cannot fulfill its legitimate functions. It must be free to denounce sin, in high places and in low places—in Governors, in Judges, in Senators, in Legislators, and even in wicked laws, which may find their way to the statute books. No earthly power can stand between God and his servant, who is divinely commissioned to declare his will. It is the business of the Christian minister to preach the gospel—to preach the whole gospel, though earth and hell resist him.

The powers that be are ordained of God, then, not to be the ministers of evil, but to be the ministers of good; not to muzzle the mouth of God's servant, but to protect him in his heaven-appointed work. Civil government is good. Judges dispensing equal justice between man and man, sit in the place of God, and are to be held in all honor, when confining themselves to their legitimate sphere. Rulers are to be a terror to evil workers, and not to those that do good. "He is the minister of God to thee for good, but if thou do that which is evil, be afraid, for he beareth not the sword in vain. For he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil. Wherefore the Christian must needs be subject, not only for [fear of the] wrath [of the magistrate,] but for the sake of a good conscience." For this cause the Christian must "pay tribute."

The crime of embezzling the tribute and taxes, at the time of writing this epistle prevailed over the whole Roman Empire. The more striking in this respect was the contrast of the Christians, who although enemies of the heathen, yet manifested such integrity in regard to the tribute that Turtullian affirms, "What the Romans lost by Christians in the way of their Temple dues, was compensated by their conscientiousness in paying the taxes."* "But yet," cries the advocate of the lower law of man, "Is it not the doctrine of the Apostle that 'he that resists the power, resists the ordinance of God?' " Did not the Christians do wrong who refused to pay for the support of idol worship? Was not Nero's power legitimate? We answer it was, when it commanded things lawful and according to God's word. It was not lawful and was not to be obeyed, when it commanded anything contrary to God's revealed will. The powers that be *ἐπὶ θεοῦ τεταγμένοι εἰσὶ* are arranged under God, subject to the divine will, and not elevated above it. They are ever under God's direction and control, whether the power be a Monarchy or a Republic—a limited or an absolute Monarchy, an Aristocracy or an Oligarchy, it matters not, so long as it fulfills its legitimate functions, and confines itself to its own province, and gauges its enactments continually by the holy will of Jehovah, as expressed in his Holy Word, it is right, and it is to be obeyed, otherwise it is wrong and not to be obeyed, for obedience thereto involves disobedience to God, which under no circumstances can ever be allowed. We are to serve and obey God, whatever be the consequences. Duty is ours, consequences belong to God. We may safely leave results in the Divine hand. In no case *whatever* may we do evil that good may come. "The damnation of such is just," says Paul, who teach this abominable doctrine. We may do things indifferent, or leave them undone, as the eating of meat. In such case we should act upon the principle of expediency. It may be perfectly proper in itself, for me to eat meat or drink wine, but if thereby my brother is offended or stumbled, it is expedient that I should refrain, that I may not injure his weak conscience.

But the doctrine of expediency has nothing to do in excusing us from the performance of our moral and religious duties. To do

* See Turtullian Apol. C. 42, *infine*.

right is ever the *highest expediency*. Right doing is a solemn duty which we owe to God, and no circumstances but those of absolute necessity can absolve us for a moment. Wrong doing is always forbidden, and no civil, no earthly power can excuse us therefrom. The great law of God is that *we are to love him with all the heart and our neighbor as ourselves*. Any law or enactment of man therefore, which interferes and prevents us from discharging this law of God, is in fact, a dead letter, and is no law, and is therefore not to be obeyed—we are rather to make up our minds to suffer its penalty, as Daniel did when thrown into the den of lions, than to sin against God. The same is equally true of the second table of the law, “*Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.*”

If any human enactment says, *thou shalt not feed the hungry, or clothe the naked, or give shelter to the panting fugitive*, that law is void. It interferes with, and is contrary to the law of God, and is not to be regarded. We may suffer its penalty, but we are not to obey its iniquitous commands.

I would say further, we are to seek by all proper means the immediate overthrow and abrogation of all such iniquitous statutes. The Christian minister, as well as the Christian member of the household of faith, is also a citizen. Paul was a Roman citizen, and on more than one occasion, availed himself of this advantage, “*And Paul said I am a man which am a Jew of Tarsus, a citizen of no mean city.*” ACTS, 21: 39. *And as they bound him with thongs, Paul said unto the centurion that stood by: “Is it lawful for you to scourge a man that is a Roman and uncondemned? When the centurion heard that, he went and told the chief captain, saying, take heed what thou doest for this man is a Roman. Then the chief captain came and said unto him, art thou a Roman? He said yea, and the chief captain answered, with a great sum obtained I this freedom; and Paul said, but I was free born.”* ACTS, 22: 25—28. And when cited before the tribunal of Felix, he further used his right as a citizen to defend himself, and finally to appeal unto Cæsar. As it was not only the right but the duty of Paul to vindicate himself and the Holy cause he served, as a citizen, so doubtless, it is our right and duty to do the same. If wicked laws get upon the Statute books, it is the duty of the Christian citizen to seek their abrogation, and if they undertake to compel us to disobey God, we are not to regard them, but to resist them, by all

peaceable means, and suffer their penalty if need be. So likewise if ungodly rulers bear sway, it is our duty to seek for the appointment of other and better men. The duty of *voting*, therefore, becomes often an imperative Christian duty. At all times therefore, and in all places, the Christian should lift up his voice and act for *the right*; avoiding violent partizan feeling as far as possible, yet never compromising or yielding *the right*.

The principles of faith and action, above recounted, we believe have their foundation in the infallible word of God. We wish now to make a brief application of some of them to the great question of our day, and of our country, the question of American Slavery. It is in vain for us to say that we have nothing to do with it; that it is a question which belongs to those communities in which it exists as an institution. Whether we will or not, it has a great deal to do with us, both as members of Christ's Church and of the body politic. And even though it had nothing to do with us, yet I think we have much to do with that, as a stupendous system of iniquity existing among men. This was Cain's argument, "Am I my brother's keeper?" It is not to be forgotten, we have an old law written in our scriptures, "*Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself*." And another also, "*Thou shalt not suffer sin upon thy neighbor; thou shalt in any wise rebuke him*." And further, the Savior has taught us in the parable of the Good Samaritan, that we are the neighbor of him to whom we may show mercy, whether he be in our immediate vicinity or many miles away.

It would, I think be a very unchristian declaration, to say that we have nothing to do, even with the woes and sufferings and sorrows of the poor Chinese and Hindoos, though they be on the other side of the globe. And our Christian hearts rightly dilate with gladness, when we learn that some poor orphans, through our liberality are snatched from heathen influences, provided with comfortable clothing, and blessed with the best of Christian instruction, by our devoted missionaries in those distant lands.

"This is Christian, this is right," say all. Is it not equally Christian and right, to care for the poor orphan, who is torn from his home and kindred, by the wicked slave trader, nearer home? If the poor colored man be our neighbor, we doubtless have duties to him, as well as to the Hindoo or the Chinaman. We are to do

what we can to relieve the woes of the one, as well as the woes of the other. We have much to do then, with the slave and with slavery.

But slavery in these days is rampant and impudent. Our fathers wisely sought to confine it within the boundaries of the old Slave States. The ordinance of 1787, in respect to the Northwest Territory, and the restriction of 1820, commonly called the Missouri restriction, it has swept away. It is even legalized in all the Territories of the Union, from Mexico to the British possessions. It lifts its unblushing face in the Capitol of the nation. It pursues its panting fugitives along the highways of all the free States of the North. It interferes with the sacred rights of hospitality commanded by the Savior of sinners. It says, *thou shalt not clothe the naked, and thou shalt not feed the hungry.*

It has slain our brothers upon the plains of Kansas. It has burned their dwellings and driven them from their peaceful homes. It is this very hour, driving hundreds of peaceful devoted Christians from their property and homes in the Southern States, for the simple reason that they believe that *we should "break every yoke and let the oppressed go free."* It has struck the cap of liberty from our coins, and it seeks everywhere to trample freedom into the dust.

Slavery therefore has much to do with us, and since it has become rampant and aggressive, I here proclaim, in the name of the God of the oppressed it shall come to an *everlasting end*. We may as well come right to the point, and deal honestly with ourselves in respect to this stupendous iniquity.

Some men among us, in high repute, both in the Church and in the State have pronounced it "*a Christian Institution.*"

But I must utter my entire dissent. It is *unchristian* and *anti-christian*. At one blow it destroys the second table of the Law. "*Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.*" Slavery is not doing to others as we would have others do to us. It is on the contrary, doing to others as we would *not* have them do to us. No willing, wilful slaveholder can either keep the law of love, or the golden rule.

What wilful slaveholder is willing to change circumstances with his slave in one single respect? Is he willing to become a chattel? not he. Is he willing to submit himself and family to the tender mercies of a Negro? not he. Is he, or could he be

willing to work for a single week for a kind and tender hearted negro even? not he. Is he even willing that a negro should be upon an equality with him, whether in the church or in the State? I answer, though I need not answer,—No! Slavery and slaveholding are ever contrary to the law of love.

The legal relation may exist as a matter of necessity, without sin. But in all cases where the relation is continued unnecessarily it must always be in so far wrong, or sinful; as violating both the golden rule and the law of love. It is to be observed also, that slaveholding violates especially the first table of the law. "*Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, &c.*" Slaveholding implies that the slave is subject to the will of the master. When the master commands, the slave must obey. He is not at liberty to say with the Apostle "Whether it be right in the sight of God, to hearken unto you rather than unto God, judge ye." Slavery is a usurpation therefore. It interferes with the right of God to the service of his children. God says, "Search the scriptures." Slavery says, "It is unlawful to teach slaves to read." God says to children, "obey your parents;" Slavery says, "*obey your masters;*" God says, "Thou shalt not commit adultery," Slavery says, "adultery is no crime;" God says, "Marriage is honorable in all," Slavery says, "You might as well marry cattle." Thus this horrible system goes on violating every precept of the Decalogue, either directly or indirectly,—trampling under foot the Divine word as an unclean thing.

But says one, "Did not Abraham hold slaves?" I answer, No. Abraham had *servants*, but so far as I have been able to ascertain he had no slaves. I know of no proof of the assertion that Abraham was a slaveholder. I know there was a class of persons in his house bought with money (literally the purchase of silver.)

They might have been hired servants, or they might have been persons purchased from captivity, and retained as members of his household. But this phrase is no certain evidence that he held them as slaves. They may have been purchased out of bondage, for merciful purposes; no man can deny it, and purchases of this kind are right. But we have no right to sell a fellow being into bondage. Abraham *bought* indeed. But Abraham did not sell. But slaveholders do not limit themselves to buying; they also sell, and justify themselves in so doing. Abraham had ser-

vants. This is evident. Eleazer of Damascus was his servant. He was moreover Abraham's associate, and the steward of his house. But there is no evidence that he was Abraham's slave, i. e., that he was a chattel personal, and held, body and mind subject to Abraham's will.

In the event of Sarah's having no son, Abraham proposed to make him his heir, a circumstance altogether at variance with the idea that he was a slave. But admit for the sake of the argument that Abraham did hold slaves. What then? Abraham deceived Pharaoh. He deceived Abimelech. He in fact, told a lie to each of them.

If Abraham told lies, is lying therefore justifiable? Is lying right? Abraham held concubines. Is concubinage therefore right? Is there any evidence that a Just and Holy God approved of these things in his otherwise faithful servant? I answer, none at all.

It is frequently said in defence of slavery that the children of Israel were slaveholders, and therefore slaveholding is right. This is a very superficial view of the subject, and altogether too indiscriminate. The truth upon this point is embodied in the following statement. There were among the Hebrews two classes of servants, *Hired* servants, and *Bond* servants. Hired servants corresponded exactly with the hired servants of our day. Bond servants corresponded with those persons who are reduced to involuntary service for crime. Such as serve in our Houses of Correction, and State Prisons. The fullest passage on the subject, is found in Leviticus, 25 : 39-46. "And if thy brother that dwelleth by thee be waxen poor, and be sold unto thee, thou shalt not compel him to serve as a bond servant, but as a hired servant and a sojourner he shall be with thee and shall serve thee unto the year of Jubilee ; and then shall he depart from thee, both he and his children with him, and shall return unto his own family, and unto the possession of his fathers shall he return. For they are my servants which I brought forth out of the land of Egypt ; they shall not be sold as bondmen. Thou shalt not rule over him with rigor, but shalt fear thy God. Both thy bondmen and thy bondmaids, which thou mayest have, shall be of the heathen, which are round about you ; of them may ye buy bondmen and bondmaids." A Hebrew man might sell himself as a "hired ser-

vant ;" but not as a perpetual servant, and he could not even hire himself out for a longer period than till the year of Jubilee.

But the case was different with the heathen. They had been guilty of idolatry and of the various abominations with it: on this account they might be bought and held to service. But even they must be released on the year of Jubilee. "*Ye shall hallow the fiftieth year, and proclaim liberty throughout all the land, to ALL the inhabitants thereof.*"—LEV. 25 : 10. Such was the slavery, and such only, as existed among the Jews by Divine authority. Bondmen became such only for crime, and might be released at any time. So far from slavery being an institution of the Old Testament, we find numerous denunciations of God against it, and attendant sins, e. g. : "*He that stealeth a man and selleth him, or if he be found in his hand he shall surely be put to death.*"—EX. 21 : 16. "*For they are my servants which I brought forth out of the land of Egypt.*"—LEV. 25 : 42. "*If a man be found stealing any of his brethren of the children of Israel, and maketh merchandize of him, or selleth him, then that thief shall die, and thou shalt put evil away from among you.*"—DEUT., 24 : 7.

"*Therefore thus saith the Lord ye have not hearkened unto me in proclaiming liberty, every one to his brother, and every man to his neighbour ; behold I proclaim a liberty for you, saith the Lord, to the sword, to the pestilence, and to the famine ; and I will make you to be removed into all the kingdoms of the earth.*" JER., 34 : 17.

"*Is not this the fast that I have chosen ? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke ? Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house ? When thou seest the naked that thou cover him ; and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh ?*" ISA., 58 : 6-7.

We say therefore with the highest degree of confidence that the supposition that our Christian Scriptures do in any respect sanction the practice of involuntary servitude, except for crime is an entire misapprehension. From Genesis to Revelation, its principles inculcate justice and humanity, righteousness and truth, freedom and liberty to every child of man. And now we say further, that involuntary servitude or slavery except for crime, is as evidently contrary to natural right, as it is contrary to the Christian Scriptures. We hold it as an axiom in law and morals that every man

by nature is possessed of certain inalienable rights, among which are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness,—a right to his own body and his own soul, a right to the avails of his own labor and to the productions of his mind. And while he does not interfere with the same rights in others, no man,—no society of men may interfere with him. I need not say that slavery denies these rights, at least to the black man. In fact a negro slave has no rights which a white man is bound to respect.

Nearly a century ago that great and good man, Mr. John Wesley, in his "*Thoughts on Slavery*," declares, "I strike at the root of this complicated villainy. I absolutely deny all slaveholding to be consistent with any degree of natural justice." "Perhaps you will say, I do not buy negroes; I only use those left by my father. So far is well; but is that enough to satisfy your own conscience? Had your father, have you, has any living man a right to use another as a slave? It cannot be, even setting Revelation aside. It cannot be that either war or contract can give any man, such a property in another as he has in his sheep and oxen. Much less is it possible that any child of man should be born a slave. Liberty is the right of every human creature, as soon as he breathes the vital air; and no law can deprive him of that right which he derives from the law of nature."

"If therefore you have any regard for justice * * * render unto all their due. Give liberty to whom liberty is due, i. e. to every child of man, to every partaker of human nature." "Let none serve you but by his own act and deed, by his own voluntary choice. Away with all whips, all chains, all compulsion. Be gentle toward all men; and see that you invariably do unto every one as you would he should unto you."*

Before leaving this part of our subject, I wish to refer to an argument for Slavery drawn from the New Testament, and the practice of the early church.

It is said that under the preaching of the Apostles, masters and slaves were converted, and both were received into the church, and that the relation of slave and slaveholder was in no way disturbed by the introduction of Christianity; that under these circumstances slaves were exhorted to be obedient to their masters, and masters

*Wesley's works, Vol. VI, Page 292.

were exhorted to give to their slaves that which is just and equal. We remark that as to the fact that there were slaves both among the Greeks and Romans there can be no doubt. They formed no exception to the general fact of the existence of slavery among barbarous and semi-barbarous nations.

Captives taken in war naturally fell into the condition of servants, or into the still lower condition of slaves, as e. g., the Helots among the Spartans, and the Penestæ of Thessaly, and the numerous conquered tribes among the Romans. As the Roman people grew rich and powerful, their slaves increased till in many parts of Italy and in the Provinces, they were more numerous than the freemen, and on some occasions insurrections were so extensive and powerful that they held out for years against the whole power of the Empire.

Now we presume it is sufficiently correct to say, that the Apostles preached the gospel both to the master and the slave; and on the profession of their faith received them at once into the Church, without obliging the master to abjure the legal relation, at least in any open or formal manner. But while so much is admitted, it must be borne in mind that the higher law of love at once did away with all cruelty, all whips, all chains, all imperious conduct, and the master and slave sat down to the same table of the Lord, and worshipped together in the same assembly; wrought together at the same occupations, worshipped around the same family altar. In a word, the master reserved no rights which the golden rule or the law of love would accord to the bondman.

Thus, in a word, in a moment, Christianity strikes a death blow to this whole system of iniquity. It destroys it in fact, though it may not destroy it at once, in law and in form. The great error of pro-slavery apologists is that they do not preach the whole Gospel, and their error in respect to the Apostles is, that they suppose that the Apostles did not. They seem to forget that the great Apostle preached to the servants, slaves of his day, "*If thou mayest be free, use it rather ;*" and another very solemn injunction to the Church "*to remember those that are in bonds as bound with them ;*" and another injunction to his brother Philemon, that he should receive his runaway slave or servant, as a "*brother beloved.*"

But says the pro-slavery apologist: "Does not this very case of Philemon prove that the relation of master and slave may remain in the Christian Church!" I reply at once, that there is scarcely a shadow of any evidence that Onesimus ever was a slave. But does not Paul say, receive him "*not now as a servant but above a servant, a brother beloved?*" Indeed, he does. But a servant is not always a slave, nor can it be proved that Onesimus was a slave at all a *chattel personal an article of merchandize*.

No argument can be drawn from the use of the word "*doulos*." It would be very strange language for Paul to speak of himself as the slave of Jesus Christ, though it would be very appropriate for him to speak of his being a *servant* of the Lord Jesus.

I know that a South Side teacher of Divinity and the President of a Northern College, a few years since had the assurance to say, and to print the declaration that "an עֶבֶד at Jerusalem;—a δούλος at Athens;—a *Servus* at Rome;—and a *Slave* at Washington have been as well understood in those respective representative cities, to mean a *chattel personal*, as *son* has been understood to mean the *child* of his father."

What a glorious discovery is here opened to our view!! These words which are used above five hundred times in the Scriptures, always mean *slave* and *slaves*! And how unfortunate that the whole forty-seven of the translators of the version of King James should never have found it out in a single instance.

They were so ignorant and so insensible to the blessings of slavery that they never rendered these oft recurring words correctly in a single instance.

And now we come to the case of Onesimus. He was a servant to Philemon,—whether a hired servant, or an apprentice, or a bond servant, or a servant for debt, we do not know nor does it matter. He owed this excellent Christian layman, this old friend of the Apostle Paul a certain amount of labor or service, and before he was converted, had wrongfully left him and gone to Rome without discharging his debt. Through the preaching of the Apostle Paul he is awakened and converted, and his conscience enlightened, he desires to go back and pay his honest debt of service to Philemon.

But let us be impressed with the words of the Apostle to Philemon, to receive this *slave* as his own bowels,—and as a *brother beloved*. If this be *slavery* we should have nothing more to say

against it. This we suppose to be the true version of the matter. At least it strikes us as the more probable view and has as good authority as any other.

This is the only case of a slaveholding Church member in the New Testament, and how much of fancy is needful, to see in good old Philemon, a slaveholder, is fully obvious. For my part I do not believe a word of the doctrine that Onesimus was a slave, or Philemon a slave owner. And if by any possibility it was so before Philemon's conversion, it could not have remained so for a single hour after his conversion, except in the continuance of the mere outward sign of the legal relation.

The spirit of Christ in the soul destroys at once the spirit of domineering and oppression in the master; and slaveholder and slaves are made at once brethren beloved in the Lord. And so it must have been in respect to all slaveholders in the early Church. And so it must be now, where there is proper instruction and a proper application of the principles of God's word. In concluding this part of our subject, we assert with the utmost confidence that both natural and revealed religion are everlastingly opposed to this "*sum of all villainies.*"

And it should not be forgotten for a moment, that just here is the battle ground. If the Bible is against Slavery, it must fall. If God is against it, it must come to an end. If it is at war with the religion of Jesus, it shall be consumed with the brightness of his coming. Let us not fail to pour in upon this giant iniquity the fire of God's Word, and its end draws nigh. God will speed the day.

And now we come to the more practical part of our subject—to inquire briefly what is our duty as members and ministers of Christ's Church in respect to this "*great evil,*" of slavery, as our discipline well terms it.

The insolence and domineering spirit of slavery, for the last fifty years, has grown with its growth, and strengthened with its strength. Our fathers wisely undertook to limit and restrict it. They began by legislating against the slave trade, and declared it to be piracy, thus subjecting such as engaged in this nefarious traffic to capital punishment. By the ordinance of 1787 they decreed that the whole Territory north-west of the Ohio River should forever be dedicated to freedom, and that involuntary servi-

tude, except for crime, should forever be excluded. In 1820, after a desperate fight, they admitted Missouri as a slave State, on the express condition and compromise that no more slave States should be formed above the parallel of 36° 30'. Then, as soon as the insolent, domineering spirit of slavery saw that it had the power, it trampled upon this solemn compact, and laid open the fair fields of Kansas and Nebraska to the encroachments of the slave power. But, thank God! "*The wicked have made a pit and digged it, and fell into the ditch which they made.*" The doctrine of Popular Sovereignty, by which slavery expected to ride into power in Kansas and Nebraska, became the pit of its ruin in those fair domains.

Yet slavery will not stop its aggressions. The whole of the free soil of the Northern States has become a hunting ground against the panting fugitive from oppression, and there are no rights of citizenship for a man, however worthy or intelligent he may be, who has a single drop of African blood in his veins. Such is the position of the general government of our country, sanctioned by majorities of Congress, and of the Supreme Court of the country.

Brethren! The question is, what is our duty, in this state of things, as ministers and members of Christ's Church? Are we ignobly to bend ourselves down and be driven over rough shod by this ruthless, ungodly power? Are we to be so *prudent*, that we dare not preach *the opening of the prison doors to them that are bound*, as well as *the acceptable year of the Lord*?

When will the tides of ungodliness and cruelty be driven back, if the pulpit fails to lift up its standard, and thunder its denunciations against sin and the transgressor? Shall we be afraid of politicians, and tremble to declare the whole council of God for fear of this often unprincipled horde?—unless they be allowed the seven principles of which John Randolph spoke, viz: the five loaves and two small fishes.

If Politicians get upon our track, they must get off from it. If they have the temerity to put their wood, hay and stubble, human enactments in the way of our *higher law*, we will thunder the voice of Jehovah from Sinai against them;—we will pour the hot fire of God's word upon them till this stubble is consumed.

Our mission is to declare God's truth; to *cry aloud and spare not*; to *lift up the voice like a trumpet*; to *make known to God's*

people their transgression, and to the house of Jacob their sin. Slavery is only one of the sins of this dark catalogue. But it is the great sin of our times. But few of God's ministers, especially for the last half century, have dared to deal faithfully with it—especially in the slaveholding States.

Nothing is more clear than that the people of the South deeply feel the wrongful and insecure tenure by which they hold this kind of property. They will not allow any discussion upon it. Freedom of speech and of the press are looked upon as speedily leading to insurrection and bloodshed. We take it as an axiom, that any doctrine that shuns the light and dares not stand forth upon its own character, open and read of all men—that shuns the light, and will not be reprov'd, is essentially wicked, however much it is lauded as a patriarchal institution—a Divine institution. It is acknowledged that it sets on fire the course of nature, and is set on fire of Hell.

I do not suppose it is right for us to covet the martyr's crown, as did many worthies of the early Church. It is our duty to preserve our lives, but not at the expense of dishonor and unfaithfulness. But yet, if in the Providence of God we are called to wear it, let us put it on manfully and joyfully, for Jesus has worn it before us. And like the Apostles of old, count it all joy that we are counted worthy to suffer for the Lord Jesus, for his truth and his humble poor!

By all means we are to save sinners, pulling them out of the fire as brands from the burning. We are to use our power as citizens, but more especially are we to act upon Society in our character as messengers of mercy and heralds of the *Grace of Jesus Christ*. We are to *preach the word to be instant in season and out of season, to reprove and rebuke with all long suffering and doctrine*. We are highly to esteem the powers that be; to avail ourselves of them for our personal protection and the furtherance of the Gospel; but not to be the cringing sycophant and the vile hypocrite when they command a dishonorable or a sinful action. Rather than yield to a vile and sinful action we had better pour out our blood, knowing that God will make it the seed of the Church.

I wish, Brethren, to use language in such a way that I cannot be misunderstood. I regard slaveholding as sinful—all slavehold-

ing which is slaveholding in spirit, and slaveholding by law. There may be cases where the legal relation may be sustained for a time, for the good of the slaves, and it may be involuntary, as when slaves are inherited. But the spirit of slaveholding is always wrong, because it is contrary both to the golden rule and the law of love, and because it is inconsistent with the obligations and duties enjoined upon every man. According to the Scriptures and natural religion he ought to be free to carry out the dictates of his conscience, to control and train up his children, to reap the fruits of his labor, and to enjoy marriage and the family relation without interruption, except for crime.

As the relation of master and slave is sinful, violative, both of the principles of natural and revealed religion, it ought to be discountenanced by us as teachers of Divine Truth. It hence becomes our duty to counsel emancipation, with all kindness. We should always approach the subject in the loving, yet faithful spirit of our blessed Lord, and especially with judgments appreciative of the difficulties by which the subject is surrounded in slaveholding communities. Thus we should seek its abolition by all wise and prudent means.

As a sin, slaveholding should be dealt with in the same manner as adultery, polygamy, theft, lying, robbery, cruelty, as in fact, slaveholding involves all these to a greater or less extent.

Our fathers began rightly on this subject, preaching the Gospel and the whole Gospel, both to the master and the slave—to the slave that he should be obedient, and to the master that he should emancipate. But unfortunately they became bewildered by a false view of the doctrine of expediency, and slavery insinuated itself into the Church, and having obtained prescriptive right, it has become the source of almost uncontrollable evils. But the events of a few years past have so enlightened the public understanding and conscience of the Church, that the day is not far distant, we believe, when the Church of our choice will stand forth on this subject, *clear as the sun, fair as the moon, and terrible as an army with banners.*

Our line of conduct to the individual slaveholder, as members and ministers of Christ's Church, will indicate our duty to the State sanctioning the sin. Indeed the State is only the aggregation of individuals, and its statutes are only the expressed will of

the citizens. This will is to be respected when it is right, or morally indifferent, but to be resisted when it is wrong, and enjoins a sinful course of action. As citizens, we are to seek its abrogation by peaceful means, and in the meanwhile to endure its penalty as best we may.

I wish to guard myself as to another thought or query which may arise in your minds. Is it the duty of every minister to bring out the subject of slavery in his public ministrations? This is a matter to be left with the individual judgment and circumstances of every minister and his congregation. As the pastor of the flock, he is to give to each his portion of meat in due season, and in such quantity and quality as he may judge best. The Pulpit must be *Free*. The servant of God must preach his convictions. He must not be the pliant tool of any party in his congregation. Let him remember that he is the messenger of the Lord of Hosts, commissioned to declare the will of God to the people. If the minister preaches another Gospel besides that of Christ, the people have their remedy—they need not hear him—they need not support him. But the pulpit must be left unshackled—*must be free* to declare its convictions. It is a matter of thankfulness that the Church in our country is cut loose from the State. We ask nothing from the State, no endowments, no stipends, no support. All we ask is that it will let us alone, and protect us from ruffian violence, as it professes to do for every other citizen.

This, then, we conceive to be our true relation to the State. We are its servants so far as to preach the Gospel to its people, to salt it well with the truth of God; but not its sycophants,—not its slaves, to be told what and how we shall preach. To our Master, Jesus alone, we stand or fall.



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